



## News Front Page



Africa

Americas

Asia-Pacific

Europe

Middle East

South Asia

UK

England

N Ireland

Scotland

Wales

Politics

Education

Business

Entertainment

Science/Nature

Technology

Health

Talking Point

Country Profiles

In Depth

Programmes

BBC SPORT

BBC WEATHER

## SERVICES

Daily E-mail

News Ticker

Mobile/PDAs

Text Only

Feedback

Help

## EDITIONS

Change to UK

You are in: **UK**

Friday, 22 March, 2002, 05:28 GMT

## Churches a 'danger to children'



One pastor thought Victoria was possessed, not abused

The UK's leading Christian child protection service has warned that churches can be very dangerous places for children.

The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCAPS) says that in many churches and Christian groups, procedures to safeguard children are lax.

In the worst cases, the churches are accused of colluding in child abuse.

The documents outlining these fears are to be presented to the Victoria Climbié inquiry on Friday and have been shown to BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

### 'No training'

Victoria died in February 2000 after months of abuse by her carers - her great-aunt Marie Therese Kouao and Kouao's boyfriend, Carl Manning.

Her death came despite regular contact with four local authorities, two police child protection teams, two hospitals and social workers.

The second Victoria Climbié Inquiry Phase Two seminar is on Friday, as part of the five-meeting series debating changes to the UK's child protection system.

This seminar will discuss the role of the nation's churches in identifying the needs of

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## ON THIS STORY

- David Pearson, Churches Child Protection Advisor**  
"There are churches who are irresponsible"
- The Archbishop of Cardiff Peter Smith**  
"We do need to become more aware of the dangers"



## Full coverage

## Key stories

Major reforms sought  
Chain of neglect  
Inquiry's legacy

## Background

The reaction  
Case timeline  
Missed chances  
A life of horror  
Child care trusts

## THE TRIAL

Guilty of murder  
Scabies scared police  
'Tortured' to death

## TALKING POINT

Are safeguards now in place?

## See also:

15 Mar 02 | England  
Climbié inquiry moves to second phase  
09 Feb 02 | UK  
Child abuse priest housed by Church  
14 Mar 02 | UK  
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17 Sep 01 | UK  
'Root out child abuse' church told  
19 Feb 02 | England  
Climbié parents consider legal action  
19 Feb 02 | England  
Accusations fly at Climbié inquiry

children at risk.

During the first phase of the inquiry, which focused on Victoria's case, it was revealed that preachers at three churches failed to notice that Victoria was in danger.



Kouao abused Victoria

The eight-year-old was taken to churches by Kouao and one pastor who saw Victoria admitted to the inquiry, in October, that he had believed the little girl was possessed.

Pascal Orome, of the Mission Ensemble Pour Christ church, Borough, south London, said: "What I had heard did not sound like a medical problem. I thought it would more likely be a spiritual problem."

A survey of theological colleges by the CCAPS found that only half of the respondents offered child protection training to future ministers.

Among those attending the seminar is CCAPS director David Pearson, who has helped provide many churches with comprehensive training on this issue.

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[Victoria Climbié Inquiry](#)

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